

Big-Time Health with a Small-Town Touch

Dr. Robert Reier

BY LISA BALDINO

Dr. Robert Reier's goal is to be the small-town doctor. That is, he wants to be the health resource for Harford County, and get back to the basics of doctor-patient relationships. A chiropractor by license and degree, Dr. Reier is also a holistic specialist and an educator, and he happens to be the mayor of Bel Air. Combining all these roles puts him in an ideal position to influence the local approach to health and wellness. Indeed, he says he is trying to shift the health care paradigm by advocating lifestyle modification and optimal health.

"In the 20 years I've been in practice, I've seen the overall deterioration of patient health," Dr. Reier says. "We are heavier as a nation, and it affects the way we feel and the way we heal." In addition, Dr. Reier says the nation doesn't have a health care system; it has a disease management system. "Millions of Americans are on maintenance medications that manage their conditions, rather than being taught how to implement simple changes to dramatically improve their overall health profile. I want to empower the patient through sound scientific principles and provide self-management strategies that foster independence," he explains. "I ask, 'how can I improve one's overall health,' as

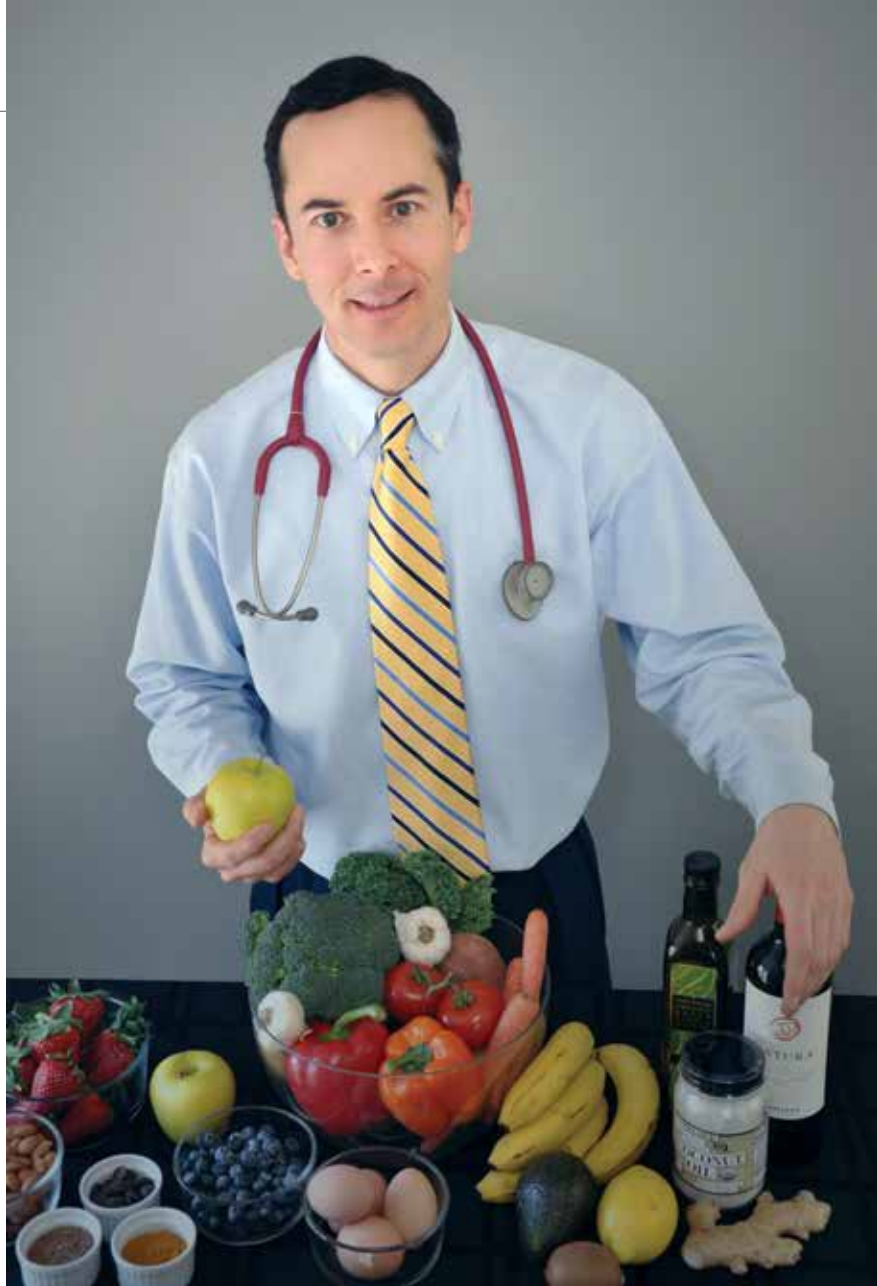
opposed to, 'how can I simply address the symptom?'"

Dr. Reier, a Baltimore County native, opened his practice in Harford County in 1999. He moved to his current East Broadway location in 2004, where he designed a homey, comfortable office within a rambling old house that has become Chiropractic Care of Bel Air. Here, he listens to patient needs and helps to find the right path to healing by creating the traditional doctor-patient relationship. "I have that small-town mentality – I even live above my practice," he admits.

Dr. Reier strives to provide a caring, compassionate environment for patients, whom he and his staff say become part of an

extended family. At the first visit, regardless of the complaint, each patient receives a complete health screening, including physical examination, movement, postural, lifestyle assessment and lab work. "When you think chiropractor, you think back ache. But I didn't go to chiropractic school to simply treat backs. I was trained to be a doctor who allows patients to reach a level of health and wellness," he emphasizes. He acknowledges his pride in the doctor-patient relationships he has fostered and the patient trust he has earned.

Dr. Reier says he will readily refer people to another medical or complementary specialist, if needed. However, he cites statistics showing that most of the chronic



An avid chef, Dr. Reier promotes healthy eating both in his chiropractic office and in the community as Mayor of Bel Air.

Photo by Dave Gigliotti

diseases plaguing Americans and accounting for 78 percent of healthcare costs are caused by lifestyle and environmental factors – diet, sedentary lifestyle, smoking, chronic stress and environmental toxins.

“People must be willing to change,” Dr. Reier says. Therein lies his biggest challenge: convincing people to take greater responsibility for their health. “With the environmental factors around us, the busy lives we lead, and the food choices we have, we need to take control of the things we can – one of them is diet.” Dr. Reier practices what he preaches. He can often be found in his kitchen creating easy, healthy recipes to share with his patients, or along the streets of Bel Air exercising with his two-year-old golden retriever, Jack.

Dr. Reier received his doctoral degree from The National College of Chiropractic in Lombard, Ill., after completing his undergraduate degree at Loyola University Maryland. Now, he has become the educator. “The definition of the word doctor isn’t healer; it’s teacher,” Dr. Reier comments. “People need to be taught how to live without relying on medications,” he says.

Dr. Reier has been able to take his wellness message to hundreds of local residents through his involvement in community government. He is the chairman of the Bel Air Board of Town

Commissioners, which bestows on him the title of mayor. He is also active on the board of Healthy Harford, the County’s healthy community initiative, supporting events, legislation and improvements like walking paths, running and biking trails. Dr. Reier says he never pictured himself a “politician,” but after being appointed to the Board of Commissioners in 2006 and elected to the same position the following year, he embraced the opportunity. “In life, we need to step out of our comfort zone,” he notes. “In town government, you get to see your decisions come to fruition. It’s literally where the rubber meets the road.” Dr. Reier has found great support among business owners and schools for his healthy food and exercise message. He’s hoping that educating today’s children to make good choices will also influence their parents’ choices.

According to Dr. Reier, health begins and ends with the food we eat. His advice: “If you can’t pick it, pluck it, catch it or dig it up, don’t eat it.” He recommends whole, one-ingredient foods like almonds, apples, avocados, eggs, broccoli, chicken and fish. “Health is not simply the absence of illness and disease. It’s having vitality, clarity of thought and freedom of motion.”

Dr. Robert J. Reier
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“People are fed by the food industry, which pays no attention to health, and are treated by the health industry, which pays no attention to food.”

If Dr. Robert Dr. Reier needed a platform for his mayoral post, this quote from Wendell Berry would be it. As Chairman of the Board of Town Commissioners of Bel Air since November 2013, Dr. Reier has made it a point to raise awareness of both the health industry and the eating habits of the general population. He says one of his primary goals as an elected official has been to improve the health of the County. He models solutions through his practice, Chiropractic Care of Bel Air, as well as through his community activities.

Under his guidance, the Commissioners’ Wellness Committee has joined a partnership called HEAL (Healthy Eating and Active Living) Cities & Towns Campaign, an initiative to help city officials adopt policies that improve access to physical activity, healthy food and workplace wellness in their communities.

Dr. Reier also supports citizen input and legislation for enhanced walkways and bikeways throughout the community.